

Amendments to the Specifications:

Please amend the specification as follows.

Please replace the paragraph bridging pages 17 and 18 with the following amended paragraph:

5 Referring now to Fig. 9, another important feature of the present invention is illustrated. The film layer 104 is polished down to the polish stopping layer 100 overlying the second planar top surfaces 96 of the HDP oxide layer 80. The polishing down step is preferably performed using a chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) operation. In the CMP operation, the wafer is mounted on a supportive chuck. A slurry, 10 comprising abrasive particles is held in suspension in a fluid, is introduced onto the top surface of the wafer. Typically, the wafer is rotated while a rotating polishing pad held in close contact with wafer. The interaction of the abrasive slurry, the polishing pad, and the wafer surface causes a progressive polishing away of the topmost surfaces of the wafer. While the polishing operation is removing the film layer 104, the CMP detection 15 apparatus confirms that surface being removed comprises silicon oxide. However, when the polishing reaches the topmost surface of polish stopping layer [[80]] 100, then the detection apparatus detects the presence of silicon nitride polish by-products in the slurry or detects an optical difference in the wafer top surface. The apparatus can then conclude that a silicon oxide-to-silicon nitride transition has occurred. In the preferred 20 embodiment, the polish operation continues until a second transition, from silicon nitride to silicon oxide, occurs when the [[etch]] polish stopping layer [[80]] 100 over the second planar surfaces 96 of the HDP oxide has been totally removed. Alternatively, this first CMP process could stop at the top surface of the polish stopping layer 100. At this point, the conductive lines 76' are protected by the HDP oxide layer 104.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on line 1 of page 19 with the following amended paragraph:

Referring now to Fig. 10, another important step in the present invention is illustrated. The film layer 104, the polish stopping layer 100, and the conductive lines 5 [[72]] 76 are polished down to the polish stopping layer 100 overlying the first planar top surfaces 88 to complete the polishing down of the conductive lines 76. The second stage of the CMP processing will first remove the thin film layer 104 portions of HDP oxide layer 80 overlying the second polysilicon layer 72. Next, the second polysilicon layer 72 is polished down. As the second polysilicon layer 72 is polished down, the film 10 layer 104 is polish down along with a small vein of the polish stopping layer 100 that runs parallel to the sidewalls of the second polysilicon layer 72. When the polishing step reaches the polish stopping layer 100 overlying the first planar top surfaces 88, then the CMP endpoint/transition detector detects a large silicon nitride surface area corresponding to the top surface 120 of the polish stopping layer 100. At this point, the 15 CMP process is stopped.